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Sightings of Hybrid 'Blue-winged' Ducks (*Anas*) in British Columbia

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Abstract: Two Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) × Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) hybrids are the second and third published records for British Columbia and Canada. Three Blue-winged Teal × Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*) hybrids are the first published records for British Columbia.

KEY WORDS: Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*), Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*), Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), hybrids, British Columbia.

Hybridization in waterfowl is fairly common and is an interesting aspect of their interspecific interactions. Within the blue-winged duck group of North America (Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera*, and Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*) hybridization has been reported a number of times and from widely scattered locations (Cockrum 1952, Palmer 1976).

In this paper we discuss two additional sightings of *A. discors* × *A. clypeata* hybrids and three *A. discors* × *A. cyanoptera* hybrids in British Columbia. The former are the second and third published records for the province and Canada. The latter are the first published records for the province.

Observations of four of the five described hybrids were made by the authors while surveying waterfowl in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region in 1980-81. *A. discors* was the most abundant breeding dabbling duck species in the study area, while *A. cyanoptera* occurred in scattered pairs. *A. clypeata* was intermediate in abundance. The remaining hybrid was photographed near Vancouver, in 1979 (British Columbia Provincial Museum Photo Record No. 712). All hybrids were male birds.

A summary of field notes and photographs is presented below. The first *A. discors* × *A. clypeata* hybrid was found 13 km north of 100 Mile House (51°45′N, 121°25′W) on 19 May 1980. This hybrid resembled *A. clypeata* much more than *A. discors* including a smaller spatulate bill, slightly iridescent green head, faded white facial crescent, lighter chestnut flanks spotted posteriorly; smaller white flank patch, and light grey breast flecked with black. This hybrid associated with a pair of *A. clypeata* and displayed toward the hen by rearing out of the water and rapidly submerging its head six or seven times in succession. This display resembled the bathe part of what McKinney (1970) calls the "bathe and wing-flap" display. This is one of the few displays performed by drake *A. clypeata* which does not form a part of *A. discors* display repertoire. In addition, the hybrid behaved aggressively toward the drake *A. clypeata*, causing little reaction, and was seemingly unable to disrupt the pair bond.

The second *A. discors* × *A. clypeata* hybrid was found at Roundup Lake, near 100 Mile House (51°43′N, 121°13′W) on 13 May 1981. This hybrid had a bright, but narrow, facial crescent, bright orange legs and feet, and resembled the previously described hybrid in its remaining characteristics. This hybrid was first observed with a drake *A. clypeata* and later with a drake *A. discors* and was an intermediate size.

The first *A. discors* × *A. cyanoptera* hybrid was photographed at Iona Island (49°13′N, 123°06′W) on 29 May 1979. This hybrid had a dull grey-blue head with large white crescent, red eye, white throat, cinnamon breast, cinnamon flanks with posterior white patch, dark upper and lower tail coverts, white tail tip, black and white scapulars, and yellow-orange legs.

The second *A. discors* × *A. cyanoptera* hybrid was sighted near Puntzi Lake (52°10′N, 124°00′W) on 9 May 1980. This hybrid had head colours similar to *A. discors*, a less distinct facial crescent with a central suffusion of cinnamon, and body plumage of male *A. cyanoptera* except for a spotted maroon lower neck and breast; no white flank patch was noted.

The third *A. discors* × *A. cyanoptera* hybrid was found 13 km north of 100 Mile House (51°45′N, 121°25′W) on 24 May 1980. This hybrid had a slightly iridescent cinnamon-brown head and neck, bright red eye, facial crescent just perceptible at the base of the bill but more distinct distally, and body plumage of male *A. discors*.

Weseloh and Weseloh (1979) characterized *A. discors* × *A. cyanoptera* hybrids similar to our first and second hybrids. However, the third hybrid differed in having a head and neck resembling *A. cyanoptera* and body resembling *A. discors*.

In addition to the preceding detailed records four other sightings of blue-winged duck hybrids have been noted by competent observers in British Columbia. Single male *A. discors* × *A. cyanoptera* hybrids were found at Bonds Lake, near Williams Lake, on 26 May and 2 June 1973 and at Iona Island on 1 June 1980. Single male *A. discors* × *A. clypeata* were found at Huntingdon on 27 February 1972 and Iona Island on 17 June 1979.

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These records document the occurrence of blue-winged duck hybrids in British Columbia. Evidence indicates that hybrids may occur wherever *A. discors* is sympatric with *A. cyanoptera* and *A. clypeata* (Deane 1905, Cockrum 1952, Harris and Wheeler 1965, Palmer 1976, Connelly 1977, Bolen 1978, 1979, Weseloh and Weseloh 1979, Lokemoen and Sharp 1981). Such hybrids are probably more common than current information would suggest, especially between *A. discors* and *A. cyanoptera* (J. W. Connelly pers. comm.). More than thirty such records have been published. Seven wild hybrid *A. discors* × *A. clypeata* have been previously documented (Cockrum 1952, Parkes 1958, Hall and Harris 1968, and Palmer 1976). Thus, in theory, the records presented here may not be unexpected. However, the frequency of hybrids in the Cariboo-Chilcotin in 1980-81 was unusual. This may possibly be explained by the intense nature of our surveys, including bi-weekly visits from April–August to eight waterfowl enhancement projects, which allowed us to thoroughly document the composition of local waterfowl populations. Previously, many waterfowl surveys have been executed in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and throughout the rest of British Columbia with, apparently, no resulting records of hybrids. Further studies, however, in areas where the three species are sympatric could reveal that hybridization occurs more regularly in British Columbia than documented at present.

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